

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 14569 111852Z

44

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10

LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03

NSC-10 PA-04 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19

IO-14 TRSE-00 AID-20 CIEP-02 STR-08 CEA-02 DOTE-00

FMC-04 INT-08 SCEM-02 DRC-01 /202 W

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R 111832Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6330

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK, PINT

SUBJECT: WHITELAW FAILS TO AVERT SECOND MAJOR
INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

REF: LONDON'S 13929 AND A-1439

1. A DIRECT APPEAL BY THE NEW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
EMPLOYMENT, WILLIAM WHITELAW, HAS FAILED TO DETER
THE ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND
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PAGE 02 LONDON 14569 111852Z

FIREMEN (ASLEF) FROM SETTING ASIDE A DECISION IT

MADE EARLIER IN THE DAY TO BEGIN A "GO-SLOW" ACTION ON THE RAILWAYS, AS OF MIDNIGHT TONIGHT (DECEMBER 11).

2. THE UNION IS EXPECTED TO CAUSE CONSIDERABLE DISRUPTION OF THE RAILWAYS, ASLEF IS BANNING AS OF MIDNIGHT TONIGHT (DECEMBER 11) ALL OVERTIME, SUNDAY AND REST DAY WORK, AND THE EFFECT OF THIS BAN IS EXPECTED TO BE CUMULATIVE, PARTICULARLY IN BRITISH RAIL'S SOUTHERN SYSTEM. THE BAN IS EXPECTED TO BE COUPLED WITH A "WORK TO RULE" POLICY IN MANY AREAS WHICH WILL FURTHER CONTRIBUTE TO THE BREAKDOWN OF ESSENTIAL PASSENGER AND FREIGHT SERVICES. IT WILL THUS SEVERELY DEEPEN THE INDUSTRIAL CRISIS BROUGHT ON BY THE COAL AND FUEL SHORTAGES.

3. ASLEF (WITH 29,000 MEMBERS), IS ONE OF THREE RAILWAY UNIONS NEGOTIATING WITH THE GOVERNMENT, THE NATIONAL UNION OF RAILWAYMEN (NUR) AND THE TRANSPORT SALARIED STAFFS' ASSOCIATION (TSSA), OVER A MORE THAN 50 MILLION POUND WAGE RESTRUCTURING OFFER FROM BRITISH RAIL. THE OTHER UNIONS ARE STILL NEGOTIATING AND WERE CONSIDERED MUCH MORE AMENABLE TO SETTLEMENT, BUT ASLEF REJECTED THE OFFER AS INSUFFICIENT. (IT WISHES FURTHERMORE TO RETAIN A SPECIAL "ELITE" ROLE FOR ITS MEMBERS WITHIN THE RAILWAY WAGE STRUCTURE.)

4. THE ASLEF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MET AGAIN AFTER HEARING AN APPEAL FROM MR. WHITELAW, WHO REPORTEDLY EMPHASIZED "THE EXTREME SERIOUSNESS OF THEIR THREATENED ACTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE COMMUNITY." HE DECLARED THAT THE ASLEF DECISION "COULD LEAD TO A PROGRESSIVE AND RAPID BREAKDOWN OF BOTH PASSENGER AND FREIGHT SERVICES."

5. COMMENT: THIS APPEAL BY MR. WHITELAW REPRESENTS HIS FIRST PUBLIC EFFORT TO INTERVENE IN AN INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE SINCE HE TOOK OVER HIS NEW POST. IT WILL COME AS A DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT TO MANY THAT HE WAS UNABLE TO SWAY THE ASLEF EXECUTIVE, FOR HAD HE BEEN SUCCESSFUL, IT COULD HAVE MARKED A TURNING POINT IN THE CURRENT TREND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 14569 111852Z

OF EVER-WIDENING INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT. ANOTHER MAJOR CHALLENGE WILL CONFRONT HIM IF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINERS (NUM) VOTES ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, TO CONTINUE ITS OVERTIME BAN. THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THE RAILWAY DISPUTE WITH THE NOW LONG-STANDING DISPUTES BY THE MINERS AND POWER ENGINEERS, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OIL SHORTAGE, PLACES IN MOST DRAMATIC PERSPECTIVE THE INDUSTRIAL CRISIS NOW FACING

THE COUNTRY.

ANNENBERG

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